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Are Seed Oils Are Making Us Fat & Sick? The Shocking Truth About Eggs, Soy, and Modern Farming by the Mind & Matter Podcast.

Welcome to this deep dive into the intersection of modern agriculture, metabolic science, and the hidden biological costs of our current food system. In today's discussion, we are exploring the profound insights shared by Ashley, a PhD in mechanical engineering turned regenerative farmer, and the host, a PhD in neuroscience. Together, they unpack how the very foundations of what we eat have been altered over the last century, transforming our bodies at a cellular level.

The Philosophy of Consumption and Biological Identity

At the heart of this exploration is the fundamental truth that what you consume—whether it is food, drugs, or ideas—influences exactly who you become. The mind and body react specifically to the inputs they are fed, and for many people, those inputs have become increasingly industrial. This transition often goes unnoticed until a person faces a significant health challenge. For Ashley, this journey began in her early 20s when she experienced extreme digestive issues, chronic fatigue, and cold hands and feet—symptoms that should not be present in a healthy young adult.

Her realization was that the modern pharmaceutical model often fails to address root causes, leading many to seek answers in traditional food systems and niche metabolic research. Her investigation led her to the work of pioneers like Dr. Ray Peat, who began warning about the dangers of seed oils as early as the 1970s. This shift in perspective revealed that many modern nutritional narratives, such as the demonization of saturated fat, were built on flawed premises.

The Transformation of the Modern Food System

If we look back a century, the food system was unrecognizable compared to today. Soy, which is now a cornerstone of modern agriculture, was essentially non-existent in the food supply. Its rise was not a natural evolution but a product of government subsidies and chemical-based intensive agriculture. This systemic shift changed the fatty acid composition of our entire food system, introducing "baggage" that previous generations never had to process.

Historically, crops like soy and flax were not even considered primary health foods. Because they are so high in polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs), they oxidize easily, which traditionally made them excellent sources for industrial products like paint, varnishes, and linoleum. It was only after petroleum-based alternatives replaced them in the industrial market that these oils were pivoted into the food supply as "heart-healthy" alternatives to animal fats.

The Impact of Livestock Feed on Food Quality

One of the most critical takeaways is that what livestock eat directly impacts the digestibility and nutritional value of the final product consumed by humans. In the current system, even chickens labeled as pasture-raised often derive 70 to 90 percent of their diet from conventional grain feeds filled with corn byproducts and soybean oil. This is significant because chickens and pigs are monogastric animals; unlike cows, they cannot transform their feed through multiple stomachs. Consequently, the fats they eat are deposited directly into their tissues and eggs.

This leads to the Low P Standard—a metric used to evaluate food based on the presence of PUFAs, Phytoestrogens, and Pesticides. Soy contributes all three. It is naturally high in inflammatory linoleic acid and phytoestrogens, and when grown conventionally, it is heavily treated with pesticides. Research has shown that

low-PUFA eggs can contain up to 73 percent less linoleic acid than standard organic pasture-raised eggs, highlighting a massive discrepancy in food quality that is often hidden behind identical-looking nutrition labels.

Metabolic Health and the Hibernation Effect

The shift toward a high-PUFA diet has had a documented impact on human metabolism. Data shows a steady decline in average human body temperature and basal metabolic rate (BMR) over the last century. In nature, animals like squirrels consume PUFA-rich nuts to purposefully slow their metabolism and enter hibernation. Humans may be inadvertently triggering a similar metabolic slowdown.

Polyunsaturated fats encourage a less efficient form of energy production called glycolytic metabolism, or fermentation, rather than oxidative phosphorylation. This means the body produces less energy (ATP) and generates less heat, leading to a lower body temperature. When the metabolic rate is downregulated, the body enters a fat-storage mode, making it easier to gain weight even at a lower calorie intake. This biological mechanism is exactly why industrial farmers use high-PUFA feeds to fatten livestock as quickly as possible.

The Toxic Reality of Glyphosate and Pesticides

Modern agriculture relies heavily on glyphosate, a pesticide often marketed as safe because humans lack the specific pathway it targets in plants. However, this pathway is present in the bacteria that make up the human gut microbiome. Exposure to glyphosate can lead to gut dysbiosis, where beneficial bacteria are killed off while pathogenic bacteria survive.

Furthermore, glyphosate acts as a chelating agent, sticking to essential minerals like magnesium, zinc, and iron, preventing the body from absorbing them. It also breaks down into toxic metabolites that can drive neuroinflammation and neurodegeneration. A particularly concerning "loop" exists where the body needs nutrients like choline to detoxify these pesticides, yet many modern diets—especially those moving away from animal products—are deficient in the very nutrients required for this detoxification.

The Case for Raw Dairy and Traditional Solutions

In response to these systemic issues, a return to traditional foods offers a path to healing. Raw dairy, for instance, contains a "miracle molecule" called lactoferrin. This heat-sensitive protein has anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial effects and is vital for iron regulation, yet it is largely destroyed during the pasteurization process.

Additionally, raw dairy provides living enzymes that help individuals with lowered metabolic rates digest their food more effectively. Historically, raw milk was used therapeutically to treat chronic illnesses, a practice that highlights the importance of the complex biological matrix found in unprocessed animal products.

The Power of Conscious Consumption

While the half-life of linoleic acid in human tissue is approximately 600 days—meaning it can take years to fully change your body's fatty acid composition—every conscious choice matters. Supporting small, regenerative farmers who prioritize high-quality, low-PUFA feeds is the most effective way to drive bottom-up change in the food system. By understanding that quality food often costs more because it is not subsidized by the government, consumers can reinvest in their long-term health and help restore a more biological, less chemical, way of life.

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